

## With a little help from my friends

Familiarise yourself with the story of Ruth and Naomi found in Ruth Ch 1 – 4.

Ruth and Naomi are not just friends but relations however their story is one of love and loyalty. It is a peaceful story set in the violent times of the Book of Judges. Ruth, a Moabite woman, is married to an Israelite. When he dies, Ruth shows uncommon loyalty to her Israelite mother-in-law and deep devotion to the God of Israel. Ruth was poor, a foreigner and a woman and all these counted against her but she had the good sense to listen to the advice given to her by Naomi, her mother – in - law and the older woman was rewarded by Ruth's unfaltering loyalty. Ruth was faithful and loyal to Naomi in returning to Bethlehem with her and they arrived just in time for the barley harvest. Through working in the fields behind the other workers Ruth meets Boaz, a rich relative of her former husband. He immediately accepts her and through his obligation to her as nearest male kin they are married. Ruth and Boaz have a son called Obed who grew up to be the grand father of King David. Ruth, as David's great grandmother, was therefore a major character in the genealogy of Christ.

Ruth is a shortened version of "retut" which means "lovely friend" which is exactly what she was. Her relationship with Naomi, her mother in law could not have been closer. We who are mother in laws are used to being the butt of many a joke but Ruth and Naomi were both close friends and close relations.

Please read Ruth Ch 1 v 16-17. Ruth pledges that nothing but death will separate the two of them.

Friends were very important to Jesus. He spent time deepening relationships with a few and was not always with the crowds. His teachings are full of practical suggestions on how to be a good friend. He would definitely have fully endorsed this story from the Old Testament. What of our friendships today? We too need friends but friendship doesn't just happen. It needs consistent investment of time.

There are different levels of friendship.

There are friends we see occasionally and soul-mates with whom we share everything. In our lives there is a place for both.

There are friends who change with the different seasons of life. We are drawn to people who face the same problems and share the same dreams.

A deep true friendship depends on a build up of time spent together over many years – sharing the ups and downs of life. Ruth and Naomi built up their friendship over many years, sharing their time and their faith in the God of Israel. How do our friendships measure up to theirs?

For Discussion

1. How do you view the relationship of mother – in - law to daughter – in - law today?
2. If a person is a foreigner does it impact on your befriending them in any way?
3. How do you show love, loyalty and commitment to your friends?